



Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan

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Education Policy Action Team*
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Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems
University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital
YMCA State Alliance of Michigan

Advocates for Healthy Weight in Children

Testimony House Education Committee

HB 5196

March 19, 2014

Good morning Chairwoman Lyons and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important legislation. I am Mike Maisner, Vice President of Active Communities for the Michigan Fitness Foundation. I also serve as Chair of Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan, a coalition dedicated to reducing childhood obesity in our state. I am here today to testify in strong support of HB 5196 (H-1) on behalf of our more than 150 member organizations.

Substitute H-1 of HB 5196 would address the tremendous need to expand the quantity of quality physical education being offered in grades K-8 in Michigan. The Michigan school code currently has no minimum requirements for K-8 physical education. As a result, there is a huge disparity in the amount of physical education being offered from district to district and our children are paying the price.

We are facing an obesity epidemic across this country and especially here in Michigan. Let's consider a few facts:

- Childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- 75 percent of all healthcare costs are spent on the treatment of chronic diseases, many of which could have been prevented, and obesity alone is estimated to cost us \$147 billion per year. Chronic diseases cost the U.S. an additional \$1 trillion each year in lost productivity. (Trust for America's Health)
- Nearly 200,000 deaths per year could be prevented by eliminating education-associated excess mortality; only 30,000 could be prevented by medical advances. (Martin, J. Ph.D., 2008)
- For the first time in history, we have a whole generation of young people that have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Quality physical education is part of the solution to this growing problem. Students can acquire the knowledge, skills and motivation to improve their lifelong health, thereby reducing health care costs.

While some would say that being physically fit is a personal responsibility, it is important to recognize that it is a learned behavior. We don't expect our children to show up at school already knowing how to read. Similarly, we shouldn't expect them to know everything about physical activity, nutrition and lifelong health without being taught. The best place to reach and educate our children is in the school setting with certified instructors.

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Advocates for Healthy Weight in Children

It is important to emphasize that 21st century physical education curriculums are not your mother's or father's "gym class". Comprehensive, standards based physical education curriculums are designed by some of the best minds in kinesiology, motor development research, and instructional design. Not unlike a math or science curriculum, they follow specific lesson plans with students learning and demonstrating competencies that are measureable and aligned with national standards. Provided with an appropriate amount of time in a quality physical education curriculum, Michigan students will gain the knowledge, skills, competence and confidence to be active for life.

We also know that physically fit students perform better academically:

- A study in the *Journal of School Health* found that physically fit kids scored better on standardized math and English tests than their less fit peers.
- Physical activity is linked to better concentration, reduced disruptive behaviors and higher test scores in reading, math and writing. (Delaware Department of Education, Nemours Health & Prevention Services, 2011)
- A study found that extending physical education from two days a week to daily was associated positively with academic achievement in math, reading and writing. (Ericsson, Motor Skills, Attention and Academic Achievements: An Intervention Study in School Years 1-3)
- Exercise improves executive function and academic performance and increases brain activity. (Delaware Department of Education, Nemours Health & Prevention Services, 2011)
- In one report, second and third graders who got an extra 90 minutes of physical activity per week did better on a test of spelling, reading and math, along with gaining less weight over the next three years. (Want Your Kids to do Better in School? Try Exercise, 2012. The Chicago Tribune)
- Children who are more active show greater attention, have faster cognitive processing speed and perform better on standardized academic tests than children who are less active. (Educating the Student Body, Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School, Institute of Medicine, May 2013)

If there are any concerns about the public's support of physical education, the *Harvard Forum on Health* commissioned a study and found that 91% support more physical education in schools as a way to combat childhood obesity. In a National Association for Sport and Physical Education survey of parents, 95% think a physical education curriculum should be part of the school experience for all students in grades K-12 and 76% think more school physical education could help control or prevent childhood obesity. A Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan commissioned EPIC MRA poll that surveyed a sample of 600 registered Michigan voters in 2012 found that:

- 95 percent support students in K-5 having at least 30 minutes of physical education at least two days per week during the entire school year.



Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan

Advocates for Healthy Weight in Children

- 87 percent support 6-8 grade students having a minimum of 45 minutes per day in physical education for at least one semester per year.

The American Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (now known as SHAPE America) recommends that schools provide:

- 150 minutes of instructional physical education per week for the entire school year for elementary school children.
- 225 minutes of instructional physical education per week for the entire school year for middle and high school students.

While the State Board of Education recommends that school districts follow these national guidelines, very few are in compliance. HB 5196 (H-1) will set a baseline standard and establish consistency between districts by requiring schools to provide:

- At least 90 minutes of instruction in a quality physical education curriculum per week for the entire school year and at least 60 additional minutes of physical activity per week, within the school day, for the entire school year for each of grades K-5.
- At least 45 minutes of physical education every school day for at least one semester for each of grades 6-8.

While this will not meet the national recommendations, it will clearly be a step in the right direction. A step that will help us reduce obesity in Michigan, improve both the short term and long term health of our youngest citizens and improve academic performance at the same time. The time is now! Your support of HB 5196 (H-1) will be a critical step in the right direction for Michigan's students for generations to come.

Thank you.

*Michael J. Maisner
Chair
Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan Coalition
Vice President of Active Communities
Michigan Fitness Foundation
(517) 908-3820
mmaisner@michiganfitness.org*